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Preliminary

HOUSEWIVES' ACCEPTANCE OF NUTRITION INFORMATION IN AN URBAN COMMUNITY

The findings given here are in the nature of a preliminary summary of the major findings of the survey made in Richmond, Virginia, in June 1947. The major objectives cited in the administrative needs on which the survey was based were:

1. To measure the level of information on nutrition among housewives in an urban community and to ascertain the attitudes of the housewives toward nutrition.
2. To analyze the effectiveness of various media which are used in the dissemination of nutrition information.
3. To attempt a determination of certain prime motivating factors which can be used as a basis for educational procedure designed to promote more widespread use of nutrition among housewives.

Objectives of this study are indicated by Roman numerals. The sub-objectives are in question form.

How the sample was selected: The sample was a cross-section sample of 400 homemakers in metropolitan Richmond. Sample blocks were selected, using census block statistics, with probabilities proportional to the number of dwellings included. The sample was stratified geographically. Two homemakers, on an average, were interviewed in each sample block. The statistical reliability of the sample was checked by comparing some of its characteristics with census data for Richmond.

OBJECTIVE I.- To measure the level of information on nutrition among housewives in an urban community and to ascertain the attitudes of the housewives toward nutrition information.

FINDINGS

Do Richmond housewives understand the major principles of nutrition?
Has there been any change in the nutrition levels since 1942?

To a great extent, Richmond housewives are unacquainted with basic information on nutrition. 1/ A very small proportion (4 percent) are found to have adequate knowledge of nutrition. The majority of housewives have either scattered information or little or no information. These results indicate that there has been very little change in the level of nutrition knowledge since 1942. In a similar survey made then, the findings were almost identical.

1/ The codes and questions used to evaluate the housewife's level of knowledge on nutrition were developed cooperatively by the Bureau of Human Nutrition and Home Economics and the Bureau of Agricultural Economics and are discussed in the final report.

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How many housewives have seen the Basic Seven Chart?

The educational program conducted by Government and private industry has apparently been very successful in getting the Basic Seven Chart distributed to the housewives in Richmond. About one-half the housewives in the sample say they have seen the chart.

How adequate are the daily menus of Richmond housewives?

In this survey the housewife was asked for a detailed listing of her menu for the day previous to the one on which she was interviewed. In order to measure the adequacy of this menu, it was evaluated in terms of the "Basic Seven" food groups. 2/ When this was done, it was found that about one-half the housewives provided at least the minimum number of servings suggested for each food group.

When the menus of the housewives who do not include foods from all the basic seven groups are examined, certain food groups are found to be used more often than others. Almost all the housewives included milk, milk products, meat, poultry, fish, etc. On the other hand, over one-half did not include any citrus fruits while slightly fewer omitted the leafy green and yellow vegetables. Approximately one out of five housewives did not include either citrus fruits or green and yellow vegetables.

Are the housewives including enough milk in their family diets?

Although most of the housewives include some milk in their menu, many families in Richmond are not getting the minimum milk required in the diet. Only one out of three families in our sample was using enough milk as defined by our codes.

How do the housewives of Richmond feel about getting additional information about food? What kind of information do they want most?

It is clear that more information about food and its preparation will be well received. A high proportion of housewives say they want more information about new dishes and recipes. They do not show as much interest in ideas on nutrition, basic fundamentals of cooking, or how to buy food.

OBJECTIVE II.- To analyze the effectiveness of various media which are used in the dissemination of nutrition information.

Richmond housewives use many and varied media, of which newspapers and magazines, radio, booklets and pamphlets, friends and neighbors seem the most popular. 3/ Of all these common media, newspapers and magazines reach

2/ An adequate menu is defined here as one in which there were at least the minimum number of servings from each of the "Basic Seven" food groups except milk as given in the "National Food Guide." Milk was counted as being adequate in the given menu if there was evidence that it had been served. The adequacy of milk purchased for the family had to be evaluated separately as quantity was reported on a weekly basis.

3/ Other sources of information are: Nutrition meetings, cooking classes and information children bring home from school. These are discussed in some detail later in the summary.

the most housewives. A little more than half the housewives get their ideas from them. All four media, however, are equally effective, in the case of the use of the ideas obtained. Almost four out of five housewives said they used the ideas they obtained regardless of the source.

How many housewives say they have the various media in their homes?

The radio: 8 out of 10 women said they have a radio in working order

Newspapers: More than 9 out of 10 women said they receive a daily newspaper

Magazines: 7 out of 10 women reported having some magazine in the home

Booklets and pamphlets: 4 in 10 women said they have booklets or pamphlets in the home

What are the kinds of information housewives obtain through the four most common media?

The majority of housewives who say they have used the ideas obtained have been primarily interested in information on the preparation of new dishes, and new recipes. Nutrition information is the next most frequently mentioned.

Are media more effective when used in combination?

It is evident from the data collected that the use of a combination of media is more effective than the use of any single medium in getting ideas to women and getting them to use the ideas.

How many housewives in Richmond have attended nutrition classes and meetings?

Although one-half of the housewives had heard of classes or meetings only one-sixth said they had ever attended one.

What were the kinds of information housewives wanted to get from the meetings?

Housewives said that the information they wanted most had to do with recipes and the preparation of new dishes. It is interesting, however, that when housewives were asked what information from these meetings was most helpful, almost as many said information on nutrition as did those who said food preparation and recipes.

What did the housewives who attended think of these meetings?

Most of the housewives said they thought they were very good. The chief complaint of the few who did like them was that they already had the information that was given.

What were the main reasons housewives who had heard of meetings gave for non-attendance?

The majority of housewives said that factors of conveniences (such as time and place, no one to leave children with) prevented their attendance.

How many housewives have taken nutrition classes in school? What has been the effect of this training?

The results of this survey showed that one out of every three housewives in the sample said they had taken a class in nutrition or cooking while in school. Seven out of ten women in this group said the course had been helpful.

What kinds of information were obtained through these classes?

In contrast to the media previously mentioned, a higher proportion of the women said they obtained information on the basic fundamentals of cooking than on preparation of new dishes and recipes. Nutrition information ranked second and new dishes and recipes ranked third.

How helpful was the information obtained from these classes as compared with information from other sources?

The majority of housewives who have taken these classes said that what they learned is as useful as any knowledge gotten from other sources. Only one in three said that other sources have been better.

How effective are the schools in Richmond in the dissemination of nutrition information?

Mothers of almost half the children ^{4/} attending school attributed some nutrition information to their childrens' experience in school. About half the housewives in this group said they had been using the information brought home, for some time.

Which media do the housewives think most helpful for disseminating nutrition information?

The media selected closely parallel the actual sources the housewives have been using. Newspapers and magazines, the most popular medium, was selected by nearly one-third of the housewives. The other media considered most helpful are: radio, booklets and pamphlets, and classes and meetings.

Are housewives using the nutrition information they receive?

Close to 9 out of 10 housewives reported that they received information on food or nutrition from the various sources discussed in this study. A higher proportion, however, said they had obtained ideas on food and its preparation than on nutrition. Two out of three housewives said they have received information on food and its preparation; slightly over half on nutrition information. Of greater importance is whether housewives use the ideas obtained. Only one-third of the housewives said they use the ideas gotten on nutrition information while close to 6 out of 10 women said they used the information received on food and its preparation.

OBJECTIVE III.- To attempt a determination of certain prime motivating factors which can be used as a basis for educational procedure designed to promote more widespread use of nutrition information among housewives.

4/ Forty-one percent of the housewives in the sample have children attending school or have had children attending within the last 5 years.

Are Richmond housewives in a stress situation with regard to food?

The problem of food seems to be causing concern to a high proportion (80 percent) of the women in Richmond. Almost all the interviewed housewives complained of the same problem--the cost of food.

Do the housewives of Richmond feel that members of their families are getting enough of the right kinds of food to eat?

Analysis shows that 8 out of 10 housewives said they thought that the members of their families are getting well-balanced meals.

What do housewives themselves think would motivate them to use nutrition information?

The majority of the interviewed women in Richmond seem to feel that two motivating methods would be: (1) To point out to them that the foods they should eat are better for the health and growth of their children and, (2) to point out to them that if they eat the foods they should, they will have more energy and may live longer.

